1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

and consists ordinarily of a kitchen, occupying the greater part of the rectangle, and a second room, behind the hearth and chimney which occupy most of one end of the kitchen. There are sometimes one or two bedrooms at the opposite end of the kitchen, in addition. In East Clare this type of house is common, but there is also a squarer type which may have a second story.

The tiny peasant cabins dating from the last century are of the West Clare type; they were and are single-gabled, rectangular blocks of one or two rooms, with steep, thatched roofs and a single half-door on each side. The half-doors open directly out of the kitchen, the one to the windward kept closed. The modern stone cottages erected by the governmental agencies and patterned after those built first by the Congested Districts Board (1893–1923) are slated and weatherproofed. Except for additional four rooms, they represent the same pattern. It is impossible to give a statistical statement of the occurrence of this type of house or to correlate its numbers with those of the small farm families, but housing records show that 36 per cent of Clare's population live in three-room dwellings, 24 per cent in four-room dwellings, and 12 per cent in two-room dwellings, which seems to point to a fairly close correspondence between the proportion of small farm population to total population.

In the small farmer's house of this type, the kitchen is the seat of family life. In it are the hearth, at which cooking is done, the table around which the family — first the adult males, then the women and children — eat, the kitchen utensils, and the religious shrine of the "Blessed Lamp" and the Sacred Heart picture before which the family prays the "Family Rosary" at night. Here also is the "dresser" found in nearly every small farmer's house, a sideboard filled with fancy china and porcelain used only for family festivals and to give to marrying relatives. The family will part

592 with this china only under dire necessity. In many districts
352 the year's supply of home-cured bacon still hangs from the
353 rafters.

343 From the kitchen to the haggard, the farmyards, and cow sheds is but a step through one of the half-doors. There are found the sheds and outhouses where all the livestock, agricultural implements, carts, are kept and the fuel supply and the hayrick stand.

513 Sleeping arrangements reflect the age grading and the
561 sexual arrangements within the family. Children generally
562 occupy the "loft," a boarded attic covering from a quarter to a half of the space under the peak of the roof. If space is restricted, they may also occupy the "settlebed" in the kitchen, or they may be divided up between the two on the basis of sex. Older children and the married couple will occupy the bedrooms.

353 The room, however, which we described as occupying
592 the part of the rectangle behind the hearth in the kitchen is of especial interest. It may or may not be used as a bedroom. It is generally so used only when space is limited. But in this room all the objects of sentimental value (except the shrine and the dresser in the kitchen) are always kept: the religious pictures, the ceremonial objects brought in by the bride at marriage, and the bric-a-brac associated with the past members of the household. Where there is only one couple in the house, this room is reserved as a sort of parlor into which none but distinguished visitors are admitted. [523] The family heirlooms are there, and, lining the walls along with religious pictures, there appear the photographs of the members of the family, especially the familiar daguerreotypes of the last century. Whatever "fine" pieces of furniture [352] there may be, such as highboys, cabinets, brass candlesticks, are kept there, as are all the religious objects used when mass is celebrated in the house. All these objects are inalienable [425] in the sense that the family parts with them only when it [428] must. They descend from father to son with the house and the farm on which it stands.

2: Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1937 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Donegal

PLATE XLVIII

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1. Fire-place with iron-grate. Glencolumbkille, Co. Donegal.

2. The basket hanging to dry on the southwall of the house. Lough Eske, Co. Donegal.

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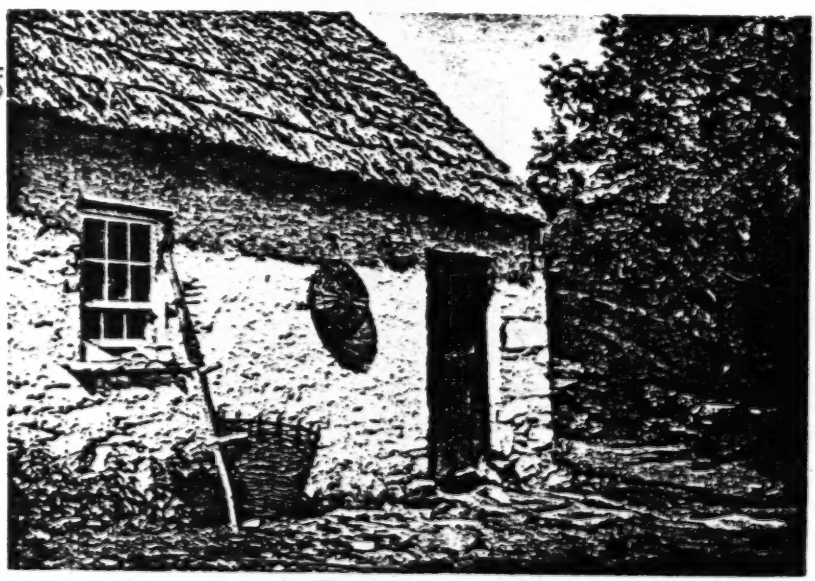

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[p. 220]

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

people describe it. Much of it was rough, wet mountain land, but the phrase implies that it was good enough at least to provide grass for animals. All farms are described in this way, for by the cows and the small 'gardens' of potatoes, cabbage, oats and turnips, the small farmers live. We shall have more to say of agriculture in another context; I think the explanation is sufficient here.

My host's house in Luogh, as I have said, was like the others. It was a bit 'stronger', that is, neater, better built and kept, than many of the others, but it was like the others in all essentials. It was a white-washed stone cottage, rectangular, roofed with slate (though it was only a few years ago that they gave up thatch). Its long sides faced roughly north and south, each with a door opening directly out into the yards. In the gable of the roof was a loft for sleeping; otherwise it was confined to a single story. The central room, the largest by far, was the kitchen. There the family passed their lives and prepared and ate the food cooked on the hearth. The hearth was an open turf fire, built in a chimney large enough to have two hobs or seats deep within on either side. It had, too, an iron hook which swung the cooking-pots out into the room from off the fire.

Behind this hearth was another room. It was called, for its position in the house, the 'west room'. This is the 'west room' which is to provide my first example.

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

342 In most countrymen's houses, especially in
353 poorer regions, the 'west room', that behind the hearth, is the only room except for the kitchen and the loft. In some houses, however, there is another room too. This is usually a bedroom, at the opposite end of the kitchen. This was the case at my host's.

353 But in either case it soon becomes apparent that there is something special about the west room. At Luogh this struck one's eye immediately. At my host's the room was a sort of parlour into which none but distinguished guests were admitted. In it were kept pictures of the dead and emigrated members of the family, all 'fine' pieces of furniture, symbolic brass objects brought in by the bride at marriage; the rubrics used when mass was celebrated in the house, in fact all religious objects, crucifixes, and so forth, except the 'blessed lamp' and a 'holy picture' in the kitchen. Nor were my hosts alone in keeping objects of sentimental and religious value in this special room. Other houses did likewise. The general feeling was that such objects 'belonged' there.

353 But these facts had little significance until others
776 began to appear. Here we enter the realm which we ordinarily call 'old custom'. The 'west room' had still another association, of a supernatural cast. This appeared only gradually. The 'west room' was of central importance in fairy lore.

In this all Luogh concurred, though few could

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

be found to give it expression. The cult of the fairies, these days, is branded as 'superstition'. It is under fire from townsman, school-teacher, and priest. But even those who could express no views could be seen to act as if they too were believers.

Where fairy paths were remembered to pass the house, they went by the west room. Where food and water was left out at night, it was left there. No outhouse, shed, or other building could be built on this side of the house. That would bring bad luck. Very few could or would tell why; they left it to a common inference. The building would be 'in the way'. Nevertheless, reluctant as they might be to express belief, my hosts none the less practised it. No house of Luogh's twenty-six had any shed or outhouse at its western end.

Here were two very definite associations with the west room. What did they mean? The attitudes they represented were respect, and perhaps a little fear; but it was respect that was dominant. What was this respect and why should it show itself in fairy-lore and in household furnishing?

Faced with such a problem the anthropologist's usual recourse is to history. Traditionally the west is the land of the dead. In the ancient sun-cult, in which early man has likened his own progress to that of the sun's daily and yearly course, the west is the sacred abode of the dead. Even today, we speak of dying, half jocularly, as 'going west'. In ancient Celtic mythology, the heaven at life's end,

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

353 773 776 *Tír na nÓg*, and Avalon, the island of apple trees which the Greeks knew as the Garden of the Hesperides, and which in a Christian rendering the blessed Saint Brendan may have reached, lies to the west in the setting sun. It is very likely that in this folk practice there survives nearly all that remains of an elaborate early mythology.

Alas for our questioning, no one remembers Avalon in Luogh, *Tír na nÓg* is a dying legend. If you ask the old men about the west, tales of sunken cities and strange sea-creatures greet your ears; ask about the fairies and fairy paths and you get, first, indignant denials of such degrading belief, and then anecdotes, tales, incidents, which illustrate their character and their power for good and evil. Ask about the furniture of this room, and you learn only that it is the right and fitting thing that the objects fill this room and no other. No one can trace the continuity; tradition is felt in the mass rather than in the particular.

We are left then with what we can hear and observe about the present. To question upon anything else is to get nowhere; it merely starts a chain of obscuring generalities more inspired by the question than by what Luogh feels and thinks and does.

353 888 But the case is not hopeless. If one casts one's reliance upon observations and questions in the present, new facts appear. The west room figures in marriage. In the contracts drawn up it is often

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

mentioned by name. It is the room reserved for themselves by the old people, the father and mother of the groom; they reserve it for their own use after they turn over the farm to their sons at marriage.

Ask about this and more information comes to you. It is into this room that the old couple move. The room is theirs. Younger members of the household dare not enter it except with permission. Indeed, it is the old couple who throw their aura around the room; the respect owed them is very like that felt toward the room they occupy. Here one enters a new field of behaviour and attitude in human relations. The honour and command of the old couple do not leave them altogether when they retire from active ownership of the farm. They enter a new status of which the associations round the west room are one reflexion.

So it goes, the new questions and new observations lead not to a prehistory or a chain of continuities, but to an ever-widening number of living associations which colour the relations of men and women, old and young. They lead to a realization of the laws and custom by which the small farmers find their lives ordered. In this instance, the west room of Luogh is a dim survival, perhaps, of Avalon and *Tír na nÓg*. But more certainly it is a focal point in a system of values some little of which we have begun to glimpse. Old custom in the west room thus gives

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Down

PLATE I

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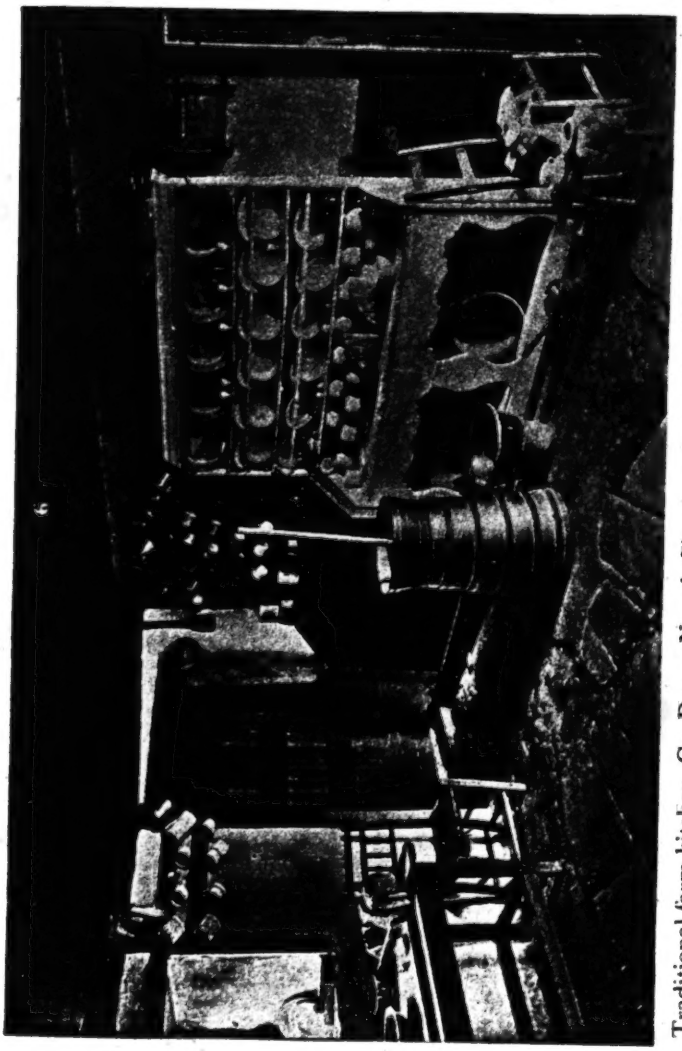

Traditional farm kitchen, Co. Down. Note baking-board on table (*left*) and meal ark to left of dresser, with beetle hanging above.

[facing p. 32]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Antrim

PLATE 2

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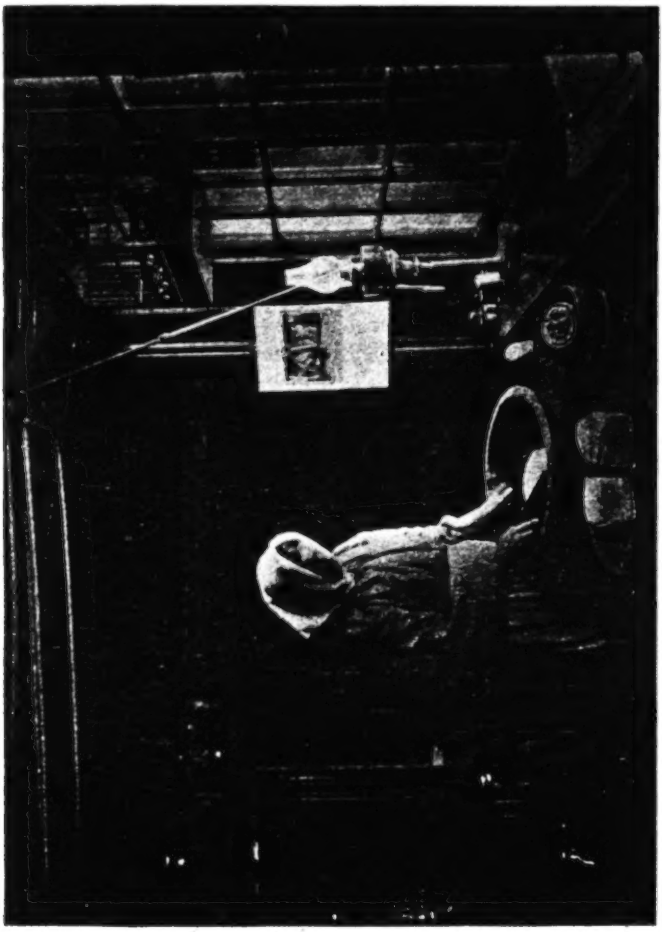

Butter-making in a Co. Antrim farm kitchen.

[facing p. 33]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

342 front door, for the cows are kept in a byre which is a continua-
362 tion of the dwelling house, an obvious convenience though there
231 is not, as in the longhouse of Wales and Dartmoor, direct access from kitchen to feeding-walk.

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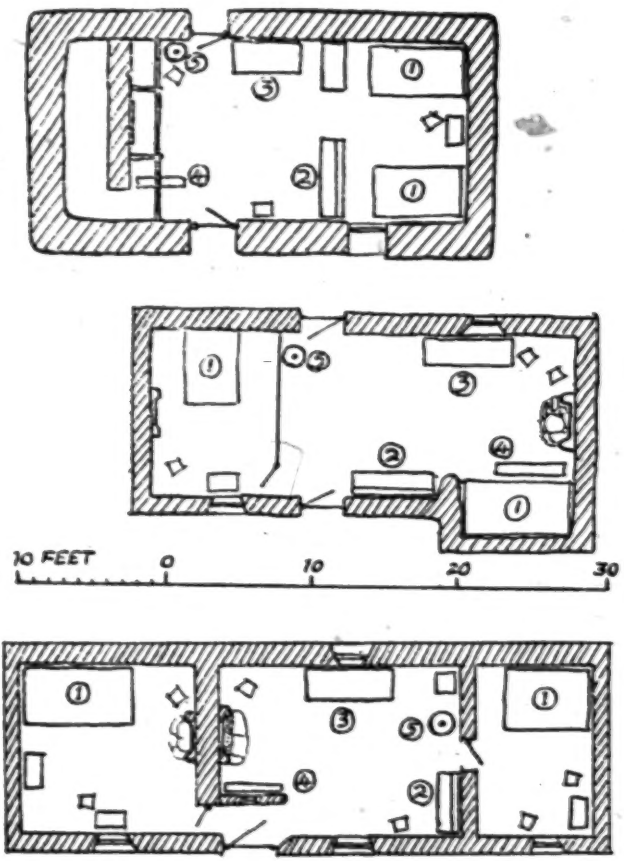

FIG. 8. House plans. *Above:* hipped-roof house, Co. Galway (compare Fig. 13, 2). *Centre:* house with outshot, Co. Donegal (compare Fig. 12, 3). *Below:* house with jamb-wall, Co. Down. (1) bed, (2) dresser, (3) table, (4) bench, (5) churn.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

342 kitchen is generally floored with puddled clay which takes a surprisingly well-wearing surface. The housewife will tell you that such a floor raises less dust than one of concrete, and if it tends to wear unevenly this matters little since the cooking pots [415] and some of the furniture which is not built-in has three legs [352] instead of four and will therefore stand firmly on an uneven floor. The rocking chair, despite New England's claim to have invented it, was surely first devised for such a floor. Lime, cowdung or ashes were sometimes added to the floor when it was being prepared, and mud scraped off the road, already well puddled, was considered an excellent floor material.[1] In Armagh, we are told, floors were made by simply digging up the ground and trampling it: 'They sometimes have a dance for that purpose, and many a match comes out of a thing of the sort.'[2] Another method was to keep a flock of sheep moving about the newly spread floor for some hours until it was well puddled. The bottom byre-end of the old-style one-roomed farm house was cobbled, and a flagged walk led from door to door. Devices 231 for tying up the cows were secured to or built into the bottom 353 gable: a variety of stone and wooden fasteners may still be seen in the deserted houses of Slievemore on Achill Island. One writer humorously observes of Co. Galway that the cow had to be tethered lest she should eat the bed-straw, but that pigs and poultry were free to roam.[3] The hens spent the night on a rope or pole hung across the kitchen from eave to eave, and laid their eggs in handsome nesting-baskets of woven straw (Fig. 16). Here we may notice a curious bit of folklore which suggests that hens were carefully looked after for superstitious reasons, as well as for their economic value and for the cockerels' time-keeping. It is said that every night the hens, when they argue among themselves before settling down, are plotting to leave Ireland and fly back to Norway, but in the end they decide to postpone the trip for another day! In Co. Limerick elaborate three-tier wooden hen-coops are sometimes seen in the kitchen, and in Co. Down I have found the sitting

[1] J. Binns, *The Miseries and Beauties of Ireland* (1857), 1, 112.
[2] Ibid., 186.
[3] T. A. Finlay, 'The Economics of Carna', in *The New Ireland Review* (April, 1898).

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

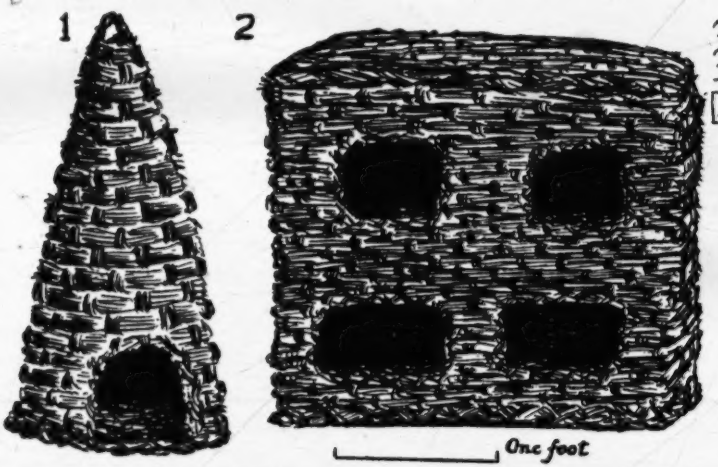

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FIG. 16. Straw hens' nests. (1) Co. Clare. (2) Co. Leitrim.

hen warmly ensconced in a stone-box alongside the fire. In the mud floor one may sometimes see large 'pot-holes', hollows in which the heavy iron pot is placed when the boiled potatoes are pounded for pig-food (Fig. 19). The wooden or iron 'beetles' with which the pounding is done are as varied in shape and size as they are indispensable (Fig. 17). Sometimes

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[415]

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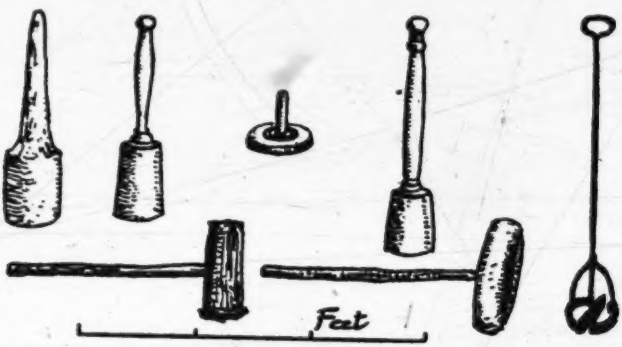

FIG. 17. Beetles, for pounding potatoes and, below, mells for 'knocking whins', Co. Antrim. Beetles similar to the first example were formerly used also for washing clothes and for breaking flax before hand-scutching.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

353 a wooden plank is set in the floor as a footing for the pot, or to give the spinning wheel a firm base. The upright churn also needs a firm footing and in the Mourne Mountains a movable granite flag was kept for this purpose. I have seen a mud floor in Co. Down with several round holes in which milk was poured [231] for each member of a family of cats. In the Bronze-Age Orkney village of Skara Brae every hut had stone-lined holes sunk in the floor, which were thought to have been used to store limpets.[1] In archaeological excavations near Belfast I have found holes which were presumably used for storing milk-products sunk in the clay floor of an 'earth-house' (souterrain) of the Dark Ages.[2] In some old houses there is a hole near the fire, either in front or let into the wall alongside, which is used to store the ashes.

354 In nearly every example of prehistoric and early historic houses which have been excavated, the hearth occupies a central position, and cooking pots would have been suspended either from the roof timbers or from specially constructed supports. We know from English travellers that this continued into recent centuries. Thus Fynes Moryson: 'the chief men in their houses make fires in the midst of the room, the smoke whereof goeth out at a hole in the top thereof.'[3] He goes on to say that the humbler clay or wattled cabins also had their fires in the middle, and in the early nineteenth century we read of houses in West Antrim where the fire, though not in the centre of the room, was 'advanced some feet from the gable wall so that the persons of the family can readily sit round it.'[4] The description given by Charles Lever of the little cabin of Owen Joyce on one of the Brannocks Islands off the west coast, even if fictional, is worth quoting because Lever was probably drawing on tradition. It reads: 'It was built in a circular form, the chimney in the middle. Certain low partitions sub-divided the space into different chambers, making the centre the common apartment of the family, where they cooked, and ate, and chatted.'[5] In the course of time, however, the fire has come to

[1] V. G. Childe, *Skara Brae*, 17.
[2] E. E. Evans, *U.J.A.*, 13 (1950), 5–27.
[3] Fynes Moryson, *The Description of Ireland*, 231.
[4] G. V. Sampson, *Memoir*, 275.
[5] Charles Lever, *The Martins of Cro' Martin* (1864), 2, ch. 31

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

354 strong horizontal beam, the brace-tree, which may extend right
342 across the kitchen from wall to wall, four or five feet out from the fire and five or six feet from the ground. Or one end of the
342 beam may rest on a supporting jamb set under one corner of the canopy. In that case—and invariably where the front door is
353 adjacent—there may be a draught screen of wood mud or stone —the jamb-wall—built out from the fireside and terminating in the jamb, so as to partition off the fireside. This curtain-wall is pierced by a small window known as the entry or spy-hole, through which an approaching visitor can be spied from the fireside through the open door (Fig. 18). I have seen a few jamb-wall houses of this type in Co. Armagh where the brace-tree nevertheless continued to the side-wall, so that the visitor had to stoop under it on entering the house. If a door is swung on the jamb-post a small hall or internal porch is readily provided. This is characteristic of developed houses of traditional style in the Lagan Valley near Belfast, and a further refinement is to hang a mirror over the jamb-window, a looking glass replacing the plain glass of the peep hole and reflecting changing fashions. The jamb-wall, called also in Ulster the hollan-
[171] wall, is well-known under that name in the south of Scotland and the north of England and may thence have reached eastern Ireland in plantation times. In Cumberland it was termed the sconce and in Lancashire the speer, which was the name of the screen which crossed the end of the halls in the Oxford colleges. James Walton tells me that in north Yorkshire the jamb post, called the witch post, is occasionally found to be covered with designs intended to protect the hearth from evil spirits. Sprigs of rowan are tied to its top for the same purpose. The partitioned hearth is characteristic of eastern and southern Ireland: it extends into the Central Lowlands but it is almost entirely lacking in the west and in the north-western province of the outshot-house to be described below. Dr. Desmond McCourt tells me that he knows of two or three hybrids—having both the outshot and the partitioned hearth—in the foothills of the Sperrin Mountains, where two cultural pro-
342 vinces meet.

354 The smoke canopy varies in shape and method of construction from one region to another. The commonest type is made of

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

canopy, sometimes on both, resting on the brace-tree is a wattled shelf or loft which goes under various names such as, in Ulster, skeagh, hurdle or flake. The double loft in the fireside from Co. Cavan illustrated in Fig. 21 is slatted and floored with reed matting, the reeds being bound together with split briar after the manner of a bee-skep. As the term hurdle would imply, these lofts are frequently made of wattle. The heat could rise through them and keep everything above bone-dry, and this was the allocated place for storing various treasured possessions as well as a great deal of 'trumpery'. Here the rushes were dried in the preparation of rush lights, and here the horse-collar was stored when not in use, a reminder that it was made partly or wholly of straw and must be kept dry.

If we are right in supposing that the wattled chimney canopy is a relatively late feature it follows that we cannot regard the chimney loft as an old element in the Irish house. Yet the loft is a traditional fitting for which there seems to be some evidence in early literature, and the need for storage-space must have led to the utilization of part of the roof space. It seems that the loft over the kitchen which nowadays has often become a bedroom in the roof—lit by a small gable window and entered by a steep stairway or even a ladder—began as a half-loft over the bottom end. This survived in Clare Island into the present century and was used to store tools and dried fish. In Fermanagh the half-loft was the hens' roosting-place, serving to protect the cows from droppings and now transferred with them to the byre. By tradition the loft is the sleeping-place of the children, and the man and woman of the house have their bed near the fire, either in the kitchen or in the bedroom behind the chimney flue.

Nowhere is the relationship between the parental bed and the fire better defined than in the traditional house of the north-west, where a small bed-wing—the outshot or *cailleach*—projects out from one of the side-walls at the chimney-end of the kitchen (Fig. 8; Fig. 12, 3). The distribution of this type of house, north of a line from Cushendun in Co. Antrim to south-western Galway, corresponds with many other north-western cultural distributions, and the area is curiously coincident with that of the oldest rocks in the country, the infertile schists and

 [text continues on p. 71]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

often oppressive landlordism were not dissimilar, a strong tradition of good quality oak furniture was standardized in the eighteenth century and has remained a source of inspiration and pride ever since. The destruction of the native oak woods and the stronger pastoral strain in Ireland were perhaps the dominant factors, but once more we note the exceptional position of the barony of Bargy and Forth, where Gabriel Beranger commented in 1780 on the good-quality, well-kept furniture: 'I have seen in these cabins bureaus of oak so clean that they shone like polished mahogany.'[1]

Sturdiness rather than elegance was the characteristic feature of Irish peasant furniture, and many small household and dairy fittings were hand-cut from the solid or lathe-turned. Yet there was no lack of care taken in the proper arrangement of the furniture in the house. Its disposition was fixed by long custom and varied little throughout the country. One is reminded of the careful division of the limited floor-space of the nomads' tent among the Lapps or Mongols. In fact only by adhering to a strict formula could the family and all their belongings be fitted into a single room which was traditionally also a byre. Invariably the centre of the room, and the whole space in front of the fire, was kept open. This was, for the bulk of the peasant population down to the eighteenth century, the family sleeping-place. According to an account of Mayo in 1799, they slept naked with their feet to the fire, lying on rushes, with a covering of blankets or day-clothes.[2] An earlier account of the Rosses of Donegal, relating to the middle of the eighteenth century, gives us more details: 'All the family lay together in one bed, and, if any visitors came in the evening, they too slept with them; for they set no bounds to their hospitality . . . heath or bent bushes were spread across the floor, to a length sufficient for the number present, and in breadth about six feet; over this litter, the mistress of the house laid part of a long plaid or blanket, on which the others, having stripped off their clothes, lay down as fast as they could; men and women together, all naked: then the mistress having drawn the rest of the blanket over them, lay down herself, naked also. This they call a

[1] Lady Wilde, 'Memoir of Gabriel Beranger', *J.R.S.A.I.* (1876), 132.
[2] In C. Otway, *Sketches in Erris and Tyrawly* (1841), 28, 32.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

church festivals and at wakes, and though they are now bought they are made by hand in a few towns by chandlers who carry on a medieval tradition. One Dublin firm, established in 1488, manufactures large church candles of beeswax by methods which can have changed little with the centuries. In the home the candles were supported in wrought-iron holders or stuck into a turf by the fireside. Tall standard holders, often with adjustable fittings, were designed to give light to the weaver at the loom, and they are most typically found in Ulster (Fig. 28). The fine embroidery which occupied the women in the linen districts must have imposed a great strain on the eyes: there are stories of a single candle serving as a central source of light for a ring of seamstresses, each of whom held her work against a bottle full of water which acted as a magnifier.

In Ireland, as throughout Atlantic Europe, the dresser ranks as the most important and elaborate piece of furniture in the kitchen, and its position is prescribed by custom. It stands either against the side wall or against the partition between kitchen and bedroom. Since this partition is of no great antiquity we can be sure that the original place of the dresser was against the side-wall and that it has developed from, and taken the place of, shelves built into or attached to the side-wall. In part of Ulster it is referred to as 'the shelf'. I have already mentioned the tiers of stone shelves set in the wall which are preserved in the deserted houses of the Slievemore cluster on Achill Island. It is believed that the fashion of open crockery shelves was diffused from the court sideboards of the later Middle Ages in France and England, and it may be surmised that the wooden dresser was readily accepted in Celtic lands to replace wall shelves, from Elizabethan times on. The adoption of delph and tea-drinking in the eighteenth century no doubt accelerated the spread of the dresser, which had become, by that time, an essential part of Irish kitchen furniture (Plate 1). The corner-cupboard, evolving in much the same way from corner-shelves, is another article of furniture with a north-west European distribution. Similarly the coffer or store-chest spread through western Europe from the later Middle Ages onwards, replacing skin, straw, hollowed wood, or basket-work containers.

 [Text continues on p. 93]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

FURNITURE AND FITTINGS

Low stools and benches seem to have been the traditional form of seating, and no doubt the floor served for the children. Travellers noted that this was the best way to avoid the smoke: 352

> By sitting low, on rushes spread,
> The smoke still hover'd overhead;
> And did more good than real harm,
> Because it kept the long house warm.[1]

Fireside seats, more or less fixed, were often of stone, a solid block of wood or a large lump of turf. In the 'round about' hearths which were common in parts of Co. Antrim, and which people who remember them have described to me, the seat behind the fire, a log of wood, was known as the dais, a dialect word for a bench or seat which appears to be of north English origin. Solid seats of coiled straw or rushes were also common (Fig. 29) but the favourite fireside stool was the three-legged creepie, resembling a milking stool and like it finding a firm hold no matter how uneven the floor. There is little evidence of chairs of any antiquity. A three-legged type found in parts of the west, with a triangular seat and a narrow one-piece back has probably evolved from the creepie but looks Germanic. The nearest approach to a distinctive Irish style is the straw or rush-seated chair, which finds its best-known homes in Co. Down and Co. Limerick. High-backed armchairs made entirely of coiled straw rope after the manner of a beehive used to be found in the west, and since they can be paralleled in many parts of western Europe from the Orkneys to Spain it is probable that their manufacture is a peasant craft of some antiquity (Fig. 29). Cradles, too, were made of straw as well as of wood and basketwork, and they were sometimes suspended from the roof. I have heard of a cradle being improvised by laying a horse-collar on the floor. The phrase 'rocked in a pot' applied to an illegitimate child is said to derive from the use of a large fireside cooking pot as cradle and hiding place: round-shouldered infants were therefore suspect. [854] [848]

Down to recent times it was the custom to keep most of the dairying equipment in the kitchen, and in the traditional peasant house the upright churn still occupies a place against the wall, 234 353

[1] W(illiam) M(offatt), *The Western Isle* (1724). Canto 2.

[Text continues p 95]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

usually opposite the fire. The absence, in a country predominantly pastoral and consuming large quantities of milk products, of a building or room set aside as a dairy is at first sight strange. Milk cattle, however, were closely identified with the woman of the house, and as we have seen they commonly shared the kitchen with the family. Owing to the scarcity of winter feeding-stuffs, moreover, the supply of milk must have been, down to a couple of centuries ago, largely confined to the summer months and butter-making was therefore undertaken at the booley houses. It must have been difficult to store the considerable amounts of milk products required for winter food, especially when one remembers that most of the peasant houses were made of wattles, sods or mud, and there is some evidence, as we shall see in Chapter IX, that they were kept underground under the old Celtic economy, in even temperatures and safe from the depredations of animals.

However this may be, the kitchen is the traditional place for keeping the churn, and for churning. The stave-built upright plunge churn, prototype of the metal milk-churn which at first faithfully copied its shape, belongs to a family of wooden vessels which has been diffused across the Old World from Ireland to Tibet and now survives most abundantly towards the limits of its range (Fig. 30). Made by local coopers, Irish churns display a considerable variety in shape and size, the shapes differing regionally, the sizes depending on the number of cows kept on the farm, for they were 'made to measure'. The small barrel-shaped churn of the south-west, with a narrow vertical mouth, would appear to be the older style. The mouth, designed to hold a lid through a hole in which the churn staff passes, is usually a separate unit attached to the body by a join—the crib—skilfully contrived and concealed under one of the encircling hoops. Some old churns have hoops of split rods, hazel or sally, but it was reckoned lucky to have one of the hoops of rowan. The staves are invariably of oak: the circular base is made in three pieces, dowelled together and having the joins sealed with rushes. Small churns which have been dug out of the bogs are generally found to have been cut from the solid, and they often have projecting lugs perforated for ease of transport. Those with holed lids were certainly churns, but others

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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234 407 Bad luck could not always be avoided, but at least it was desirable to make the toil less wearisome, and to this end a number of ingenious fittings were applied to the churn staff. Most of the examples I have seen, in the north-east, depend on the recoil of a strong spring to lift the staff, and they may well have been evolved from a spring pole, such as is used for the pole lathe, attached to the roof timbers.[1] Other devices enabled the staff to be moved in both directions by an arrangement of levers hinged to a couple-baulk. These engines, which have almost entirely gone out of use, were known as glaiks (Fig. 31).

[415]

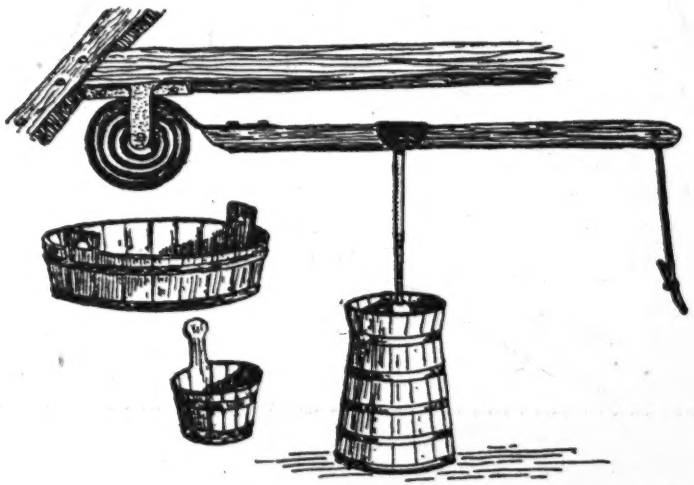

FIG. 31. Glaiks for churning, Co. Down, with milk 'keeler' and piggin, Co. Donegal.

353 788 Here we may mention other things which were hung from the roof timbers: in the more prosperous homes sides of bacon and portions of the autumn-killed ox, the mart; in poorer houses the salted ling or other 'kitchen'. And there was a strange custom of keeping in the roof, to bring luck to the livestock, part of a carcase, such as an animal's leg. This undoubtedly had its origin in the days when living-room and byre were under

[1]For another device, fitted to the churn, see my *Mourne Country*, Fig. 84.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

one roof. A relic of this practice may perhaps be seen in the sheep's bones that one occasionally finds tucked away in the keeping-holes of old-fashioned houses. Above the door the Bridget's Cross gives protection from fire and other dangers. 353 788

Besides the churn the old-time farm will have a wide range of other wooden dairying utensils, some stave-built, others carved or turned from the solid. They will include milking-piggins (Fig. 31), cream-skimmers, ladles, butter-scoops, and -prints, butter tubs and buttermilk butts. A shallow stave-built 'keeler' or a large turned bowl is kept for setting milk (Fig. 31). The solid and often shapely carved cups and methers (literally mead bowls) are already archaeological specimens (Fig. 65), and many of the other wooden containers are going the same way, including the little stave noggins described in an earlier chapter. 415 234

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

fireplace has a profound psychological significance in Inis Beag and, in a sense, is a force drawing the family together. Now that only three hookers transport peat from the mainland—when in the past there had been more than a hundred—and the price of turf increases considerably year by year, coal or bottled gas stoves are being used by most families. Although coal and gas are cheaper to burn, and coal throws out more heat than turf, the coal fire in the hearth does not foster camaraderie as does the peat fire. The replacement of fireplace by stove and the "stink" and dirtiness of coal are denounced incessantly by the islanders, and the disappearance of the "sweet smell" of burning sods and a multitude of customs associated for generations with the peat fire are lamented.

Many functions are served by "the room." It can accommodate the displaced parents after their son has married, if all agree, for it has a bed which can serve them (as well as distinguished guests, spectators at parties, and now tourists and summer language school students). This chamber is the best kept of the house, with the newest and most valuable of the furniture and often a linoleum floor, and its walls and ceiling are whitewashed or painted frequently. Family heirlooms and objects of sentimental value, which are parted with only as a last resort, are found here. Religious pictures adorn the walls, and on the mantel over the fireplace are photographs of the family going back generations, especially of those who have emigrated or are deceased. When "the stations" are performed every two decades in the cottage, the mass is read in "the room," and certain rubrics used in this ritual are afterward kept here. Finally, the chamber serves as a dance floor when the crowd at a party in the house overflows the bounds of kitchen, hall, and street.

The social universe of the islanders is divided into four segments: close kin or "friends" (Previously, I have used this word in the American sense.), distant kin or "those I have a relationship with," other islanders, and outsiders or strangers. "Friends" normally extend generationally to include ego's parents, grandparents, children, and grandchildren, and collaterally to include his affines (spouse's kinsmen), siblings, and first, second, and third cousins—termed, respectively, "four-of-kin," "six-of-kin," and "eight-of-kin."[1] With the intensification of inbreeding, most of the folk are eight-of-kin, and this is why the parish priest examines the genealogies of families at the time of the match. Marriage between first cousins is forbidden, between second cousins demands permission from the bishop, and between third the consent of the parish priest. Distant kin are relatives extended collaterally beyond eight-of-kin, while outsiders include the curates, teachers who are not islanders, lighthouse keepers, the Dane, tourists of local renown, and, as I have just indicated, even in-marrying women and descendants of recently arrived immigrants (also, of course, inquisitive anthropologists).

Although inheritance and succession are patrilineal on the island, descent is bilateral—traced through both agnatic (father's) and uterine (mother's) lines --with a strong agnatic bias.

[1] These positions are pictured horizontally (generationally) and vertically (collaterally) in block form in Arensberg and Kimball 1940:96 in the chapter "Kinship System." The Irish kinship system is common to peoples of Western Europe and America (the Eskimo type), and much of the kinship information reported by Arensberg and Kimball applies to Inis Beag.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

796
at breakfast and lamb, if available, at supper, and the family goes out only to attend [262]
mass. Many homes are decorated then for the 12 days, with cards received and [363]
sprigs of holly placed on windowsills and fireplace mantels and crepe paper and
balloons hung from the ceiling. More visiting among relatives is done between [674]
St. Stephen's Day and Epiphany than at any other time of the year, and guests are
treated to cakes and drinks, which include liquor.

764
Whereas the folk during the Christmas season are the most optimistic and
expansive, they are the least so for the three or more days following the death of
one of their number. Work halts until after the burial of the deceased—"out of
respect for the body"—and subdued talk focuses on death and salvation and the
tribulations of life on earth. It is at this time that the masochism of the islanders is
most in evidence, and they are most prone to discuss the teachings of the church,
to reveal doubts concerning the afterworld, and to bemoan their own sinful lives.
In evaluating the career of the person who has just died, an attempt is made to [761]
explain the cause of his demise, and both natural and supernatural causes are con-
sidered. Most deaths are attributed to the natural causes of old age, illness, and
accident; but death also can come as the result of God's will and the actions of
the Devil and malignant pagan forces, such as witches of the evil eye and ghosts.
765
The immediate mourning for one who dies before the age of 40 years is deep and
prolonged, particularly if small children are left with only a single parent, and it
is believed that "the good die young." One of the most disliked traditions in Inis
Beag is that of formal mourning for a year, during which time social activities for
close relatives of the deceased are curtailed severely; they cannot attend parties,
sing, dance, or play music in their homes, and men must reduce in number their
visits to the pubs. Life is so dull as a matter of course, so the complaint is, that
placing restrictions on what few social activities are available makes it almost
unbearable.

764
When a person dies, his body is "waked" in the house until taken in pro-
cession to the church during the late afternoon of the day following death. Another
procession escorts the coffin to the cemetery early the next morning, after it has
stood the night unattended near the altar. How many folk attend the wake and [602]
compose the two processions depends on the number of the dead person's kin, his [654]
prestige status, and how well he was liked. The "laying out" of the corpse for the
wake is done by close female relatives of the deceased; they wash the body and
powder its face, put on the clothes or habit, and prepare the bed on which the
corpse will rest. A man may be attired in new white bawneens and *crios* and a
woman in her wedding dress, but it is becoming more common today for the body
to be clothed in a purchased brown habit. On the breast the hands are crossed and
rosary beads entwined in the fingers, and the corpse is covered up to the chest
with a white sheet which later is used to wrap it up in the coffin. The manufacture [322]
of the coffin usually is assigned to one of the canoe and furniture makers, who [463]
assembles it crudely with unpainted boards and delivers it the night of the wake
or the following morning.

764
The wake now is a solemn occasion in most of Ireland, and is attended for
the purpose of praying for the soul of the dead and sympathizing with the relatives 198
of the deceased. But until recently it was a gay affair, merrier than a wedding,